

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2022

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting (APM) held in the Reading Room at 8pm on Monday 25th May 2022.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

Nigel Husband (NH), as Chair to the Parish Council, assumed the Chair for this Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting and formally welcomed everyone to the in-person meeting. NH introduced himself to the meeting and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

NH explained that having dealt with the formalities, he would provide a brief Chair's update, which would include a reference to the latest financials reported by both the parish council and the parochial charity.

Two topical presentations would follow from:

- (i) Michael Bourke, who takes the lead within the Parish Council on Buckland's Going Greener initiative; and
- (ii) Dion Mellows of SHA Environmental Consultancy

to extend ongoing discussions related to the issue of climate change and prompt consideration as to what practical measures we, as individuals and as a village might be able to implement.

NH introduced Buckland's Parish Councillors and Sheena Boyce, Clerk, to the meeting, outlined the role of the Parish Council, and provided an overview as to how the contributions of individual Cllrs and the Clerk come together. NH took the opportunity to express both his personal and Council's thanks for the Clerk's dedication, despite the challenging circumstances, to keeping the parish council's business running as normal and progressing significant improvements within the straitjacket of the pandemic and for managing the world of virtual meetings whilst ensuring we avoided becoming YouTube stars.

NH encouraged anyone who might be interested in standing in the 2023 parish council elections, now less than a year away, to come along to a meeting to see how it all works.

It was noted that there were 25 parishioners and 2 members of the public in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Martin and Stella Cantor, Alan and Brenda Horden and Alan and Donna Pryor.

SCC Councillor (Cllr) Helyn Clack and MVDC Cllrs Simon Budd and Paul Potter.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2021

These had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Cllrs. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was proposed by Debbie Jones, seconded by Dominic Sanders, and carried by the meeting. NH, as Chair, signed and dated the minutes.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

"As I have already mentioned, the parish council has done its best, despite the pandemic to carry on business as usual and last year there were several initiatives that were planned in 20/21 which were successfully implemented over the last few months.

As we have mentioned before the methods by which maintenance tasks and improvements are funded have shifted more in our direction in the last few years and, we, with Sheena's help had to be persuasive to find any spare funding that might be directed our way."

Starting with areas around the Village Green and Pond, in the centre of the village:

"In April, conservation kerbing was installed along the northern edge of the village green. The Parish Council is grateful to SCC Cllr Clack for a £1000 contribution from her Member allocation towards the £3,000 project. The hope is that the kerbs make it easier for drivers to park on the hard road surface and reduce the amount of damage to the village green.

More recently, D.G. Trees has undertaken a 3.5 metre crown reduction of the willow tree on the village green, to manage its overall size in accordance with the 5-year Pond and Green Management Plan.

Looking ahead, the Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers (RACV) have kindly agreed to schedule three pond clearance events this year, to be held on Tuesday 10th August, Sunday 21st August and Sunday 18th September. As the support we receive from the RACV relies on volunteers from the village stepping forward to take part – please keep some time free on at least one of the dates to come along to the village green and join in the fun – the events will all start at 10am.

I would like to thank Cllr Debbie Jones for helping to organise the recent village litter pick at which we had an excellent turn out. It was great to see several new faces who've just moved to the village in the past few months, and we would encourage them to continue their enthusiasm to help us later in the year."

Focusing on improvements to Rights of Way within Buckland:

"Earlier this spring, surface improvements were made to the sloped section of public footpath 475, located a short distance to the east of Dowdes Railway crossing. The project was a joint initiative funded by Buckland Parish Council and Surrey County Council's Countryside Access (SCC CA) team. SCC CA contractors completed the surfacing work and, as the slope is quite steep, installed a sturdy handrail. SCC CA funded half the £6,250 cost and the balance was funded by equal contributions from SCC Cllr Helyn Clack (from her Member allocation) and Buckland Parish Council.

Anyone who enjoys walking the local footpaths will have noticed how many stiles have now been replaced with kissing gates. Three gates were recently installed bringing the improvements to a conclusion. Our thanks to Dominic Sanders for arranging the installation of seventeen gates over the last three years and to Network Rail for replacing the challenging stiles at Dowdes crossing.

Consultation on initiative proposed for 2022

Buckland has benefited from a modest sum of community infrastructure funding and last year we did agree that before we allocated any funding, we would consult with you. Accordingly, the village bus shelter located opposite Buckland Deli is an oak and timber shingle structure. The shelter was gifted to Buckland to celebrate the Silver jubilee of George V. The shelter is in need of repair, and we are fearful that Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), rather than agreeing to fund repairs is more likely to seek to replace it with a modern low maintenance structure.

We have been discussing a proposal to ask MVDC if we can nominate the shelter as a heritage asset and use community infrastructure funding to restore the structure. As the shelter was originally dedicated to a jubilee it seems wholly appropriate to progress this initiative in the year of the Queens Platinum Jubilee."

NH acknowledged positive gestures of support from the meeting and, given the absence of any objection asked the Clerk to noted the meeting's support for this initiative.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England consultation on its draft proposals for a new warding pattern for Mole Valley

NH referenced a recent parish update circulated via the email group and published in the latest issue of the parish magazine which focused on this consultation.

"This process happens periodically as the population shifts since the principle is that a District Council ward boundaries should change to represent approximately the same number of electors. In our particular case the existing ward boundaries have been extended and it is proposed that the area will now include the current three B's of : Buckland and Betchworth and Brockham and Headley and Box Hill.

There were several options presented some of which would have included part of eastern Dorking and I think we were quite relieved when the preference for including Box Hill and Headley appeared in the draft proposal as generally it will represent a similar rural area and the issues and challenges of our particular neck of the woods remain similar.

The current consultation is also proposing names for the new district wards and the consultation is asking for preferences to be expressed. The front runners seem to be a simple list of the parishes that the new ward represents, similar to its current designations, or a more generic name such as Mole Valley Rural Northeast.

When Council met on 9th May, it decided to submit a response to

- (a) *express our preference for the name of the new ward to include all five settlements, by simply combining the two existing ward names, for reasons of simply clarity;*
- (b) *to ask the Boundary Commission to avoid a name that includes only some but not all five settlement names as this could be seen as dismissive of voters registered in the settlements that that are excluded; and*
- (c) *concluded that by suggesting any perceived benefit from choosing a shorter generic name would be more than offset by adopting an inclusive name that includes the names of all five settlements."*

New Local Plan for Mole Valley

“And finally whilst covering district matters, the independent examination of MVDC’s draft local plan (referred to as Future Mole Valley) is now underway and updates and key documents will continue to be published on the Future Mole Valley website (www.futuremolevalley.org) as this independent examination proceeds.

That brings me to the close of the Chairman’s report and we move onto financial reporting”.

Financial Reporting

“You will find printed copies of the

- (i) parish council full year accounts for 2021/22, with a prior year comparison and budget for the year ending 31st March 2022; and*
- (ii) parochial charity financials for the year ending 31st December 2021,*

attached to your agenda. If you have any queries or questions regarding the accounts, might I suggest you drop us an email and we will do our best to answer promptly.”

Introduction to topical presentations

“I would now like to move on to the subject that we have been discussing and which has now risen high in the agenda both nationally and locally... that of climate change and more importantly what we might do to mitigate its impact.

In many ways the subject can seem overwhelming at times and, at times difficult to see how we, as a village or individually, can have any material impact on what is going on. However, as with many things; if we all, as individuals, take some small responsibility and make even minor changes in our lifestyle, as a whole this can make significant change possible.

We thought tonight’s Annual Parish Meeting was opportunity to hold a Buckland conversation as to the practical steps we can make ‘on the home front’ both as individuals and as a village that might help contribute.

Michael Bourke, who lives in Buckland, is one of Buckland’s parish councillors, and in his day job looks at the bigger picture takes the lead for the parish council on Buckland’s Going Greener initiative and, Michael’s presentation will be followed by Dion Mellows of SHA Environmental Consultancy, who will put forward some thoughts as to what steps we might wish to consider. Our aim is to stimulate conversation to establish local opinions as to what we, as a community might set out to achieve going forward.”

5. GUEST PRESENTATIONS

Copies of the slides presented to the meeting by each of the two speakers are appended to the minutes. The thought-provoking presentations stimulated constructive discussion and were much appreciated by those attending the meeting.

6. CHAIR’S CLOSING REMARKS

NH expressed thanks to all for attending tonight and especially to Michael Bourke and Dion Mellows for their thought provoking presentations. NH thanked Debbie Jones for coordinating the light refreshments to follow and to Jillian Zocher for kindly introducing us to Anzac biscuits. NH concluded the meeting by inviting everyone to stay on to continue topical discussion and enjoy light refreshments.

Footnote: Thanks also due to each of the residents who assisted with the refreshments and with the setting up and clearing away in the Reading Room.

Appendices

- Buckland Parish Council Financials 2021/22
- Buckland Village Charity 2021
- Presentation: Michael Bourke
- Presentation : Dion Mellows